

Washington - Rep. Charlie Wilson (D-OH) joined a majority in the House of Representatives in support of legislation to provide health care to 11 million low-income children and strengthen Medicare. The Children's Health and Medicare Protection (CHAMP) Act was approved by a vote of 225 - 204.

"Children in rural areas, like much of Ohio's Sixth District, depend on Medicaid or CHIP for health insurance more than children in urban areas," Wilson said. "That's just one of the reasons I'm so pleased we did the right thing and got this important legislation passed."

The CHAMP Act reauthorizes the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) and protects coverage for 6 million children, including the 218,500 enrolled in Ohio's program. In addition, health care coverage will be extended to 5 million more low-income children, covering a total of 11 million children. CHIP was established on a bipartisan basis in 1997 by President Clinton and Congress, but must be reauthorized by September 30, 2007. If the program is not reauthorized by September 30, 6 million children nationwide could lose their health care.

The CHAMP Act also includes provisions to strengthen Medicare, control out of pocket costs for seniors and help ensure seniors have access to the doctors of their choice by stopping a scheduled 10 percent payment cut to doctors. Additionally, the legislation ends massive overpayments to private health organizations like HMOs and makes a series of preventative screenings free for Medicare beneficiaries. New free benefits under Medicare provided under the CHAMP Act include:

- diabetes screening tests
- screening for glaucoma
- an initial preventive physical examination
- bone mass measurement
- prostate cancer screening tests
- colorectal cancer screening tests
- mammography screening
- pap smear screening

"Everyone deserves quality healthcare in this country," Wilson said. "I'm so proud this legislation takes an intergenerational approach; it looks after our children and our seniors. Under this plan, seniors will continue to have access to the doctors of their choice and that includes seniors in rural areas. That's important to me."

###